

Message Text

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FOLLOWING REPEAT SANA 4053 ACTION SECSTATE INFO JIDDA USCINCEUR
CHUSMTM DHARHAN USMTM RIYADH SECDEF WASHDC DATED AUG 16:

QTE: S E C R E T SANA 4053

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, UR, XF, US
SUBJ: SOVIETS IN SOUTH ARABIA

BEGIN SUMMARY: CONTAINING THE SOVIETS IN SOUTH YEMEN
IS A POLICY WHICH WE SHOULD PURSUE BOTH TO CHECK THEIR
FURTHER EXPANSION, IN THE SHORT RUN, AND WEAKEN THEM IN
LONG RUN. END SUMMARY.

1. WASHINGTON IS FULL OF SOVIET EXPERTS. BY CONTRAST,
NO ONE IN EMBASSY SANA IMAGINES HE CAN STAND IN THAT
CHARMED CIRCLE. PERHAPS, HOWEVER, SOME VIEWS FROM
ARABISTS ON WHAT OUR SOVIET FRIENDS SEEM TO BE DOING IN
SOUTH ARABIA AND THE HORN COULD MAKE A CONTRIBUTION TO
DIALOGUE WHICH SEEMS TO BE GOING ON IN WASHINGTON TODAY
ABOUT HOW TO DEAL WITH USSR.

2. FIRST, WE DONT THINK SOVIETS WOULD THINK OF INVESTING
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AS MUCH IN SOUTH YEMEN AS THEY HAVE SIMPLY TO SHORE H
A PARTY FORM OF RULE. THEY HAVE CLEARLY ACTED FOR GEO-
POLITICAL REASONS. WE ARE CONVINCED THAT SOVIETS REGARD
WORLD NOT AS DISCRETE PEICES -- COUNTRY "X" OR "Y" WHERE
THEY HAVE PARTICULAR FRIENDS -- BUT AS ARENA FOR LARGE
ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL FORCES WHICH WASH OVER WHOLE
AREAS. THEY MAY MOVE AS OPPORTUNITIES PRESENT THEMSELVES,

RATHER THAT ON BASIS OF SOME MASTER PLAN, BUT THEIR THINKING IS REGIONAL AND GLOBAL AND AIMED ULTIMATELY AT THE US.

3. THUS, THE SOVIET AIM IN THE MIDDLE EAST HAS ALWAYS BEEN TO COMPLICATE OUR ACCESS TO OIL AND OUR ABILITY TO DEAL WITH ANY ARAB REGIME. SOVIET PROPAGANDA, ECONOMIC AID, MILITARY ASSISTANCE, AND CULTURAL RELATIONSHIPS WERE USED VIGOROUSLY AND VERY SUCCESSFULLY THROUGHOUT FIFTIES AND SIXTIES TO ESTABLISH THEMSELVES IN THE AREA AND WEAKEN US. BASIC TACTIC IN FIFTIES AND SIXTIES FOR SOVIETS WAS TO SUPPORT ARAB NATIONALISTS AND PROGRESSIVES. US, BY CONTRAST, SUPPORTED CONSERVATIVE REGIMES WHICH FEARED NATIONALISM AND PROGRESSIVISM. SOVIETS THUS ESTABLISHED THEMSELVES IN MOST POPULOUS AND MOST SOPHISTICATED STATES IN THE MIDDLE EAST WHILE WE, ALIGNED WITH MONARCHIES FOR THE MOST PART, USUALLY FOUND OURSELVES ON THE DEFENSIVE. OUR ACE IN HOLE IN THIS PERIOD WAS AN ISRAEL WHICH WE MADE SO STRONG THAT SOVIET MILITARY AID TO SYRIA, IRAQ, EGYPT, AND OTHERS WAS INVALIDATED AND DISCREDITED. ISRAELI STRENGTH SAVED THE CONSERVATIVE STATES: FOR INSTANCE, ISRAEL DEFEATING EGYPT IN 1967 FORCED THE THEN RADICAL EGYPTIANS TO WITHDRAW FROM YEMEN WHERE THEY THREATENED KINGDOM. ISRAELI STRENGTH IN 1970 DETERRED SYRIAN INTERVENTION IN TOTTERING JORDAN. ISRAELI MILITARY STRENGTH HAD ANOTHER HIGHLY VALUABLE COROLLARY FOR US

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IN THAT IT MADE OUR DIRECT INTERVENTION IN THE AREA UN-NECESSARY.

4. IN 1973 AFTER OCTOBER WAR WE FINALLY WENT ON DIPLOMATIC INITIATIVE IN SETTLEMENT EFFORTS AFTER YEARS OF ACCOMMODATING NO WAR NO PEACE SITUATION. WITH INITIATIVE WE GOT MUCH OF THE SUPPORT OF ARAB NATIONALISM. OBVIOUSLY, HOWEVER, ARAB FRUSTRATION WITH EARLIER CONFRONTATION TACTICS ALSO PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN CRUCIAL ARAB SHIFTS ON ALIGNMENT WITH US AND SETTLEMENT TERMS WITH ISRAEL. WE ALSO BENEFITTED IN POST-73 PERIOD FROM AN EXTRAORDINARY INTER-ARAB SHIFT OF POWER WHICH BROUGHT FORMERLY DEFENSIVE AND WEAK SAUDIS INTO ROLE OF STRONG AND HIGHLY CONSERVATIVE LEADERSHIP.

5. THUS, SINCE 1973, A HUGE SOVIET INVESTMENT IN AID AND PROPAGANDA, STRETCHING OVER 20-YEAR PERIOD, HAS BEEN LARGELY UNDERMINED. IN MIDDLE EAST TODAY SOVIETS HAVE LITTLE TO OFFER IN TRADE AND NOTHING IN ECONOMIC MODELS OF DEVELOPMENT OR ADVICE. THEIR EFFORTS EDUCATE ARABS HAVE LOST ALMOST ALL PRESTIGE. THEY CONTRIBUTE NEXT TO NOTHING TO DIPLOMATIC PROCESS, EITHER OF THIRD WORLD OR ARAB WORLD.

THEIR ECONOMIC AID IS SMALL AND NOT VALUED HIGHLY,
ARABS SEE SOVIET CULTURE AS STUFFY, FORMAL, IRRELEVANT;
AMERICAN CULTURE, BY CONTRAST, IS A BIT WILD BUT MUCH MORE
INTERESTING. SOVIET SOCIETY IS NOT ADMIRE; UNLIKE OUR
OWN, THE SOVIET UNION ISN'T DEMOCRATIC, ISN'T TOLERANT OF
RELIGION AND RACE, ISN'T EVOLVING OR FREE. SOVIETS ARE
FALLING BEHIND IN ARAB ESTIMATE EVEN IN HOW WELL THEY
PROVIDE FOR WELFARE OF THEIR MUCH DISCUSSED WORKERS AND PEASANTS.
SOVIET SCIENCE IS REGARDED AS SECOND-RATE BY ARABS.

6. THUS, NOT ONLY WAS SOVIET POSITION ERODING

IN ARAB
WORLD -- IN EGYPT, SUDAN, NORTH YEMEN, FOR INSTANCE --
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BUT POLITICAL BASIS FOR RESTORING IT WAS ERODING.

7. AT THIS JUNCTURE, ROUGHLY BEGINNING 1977, SOVIETS WERE
PRESENTED WITH PARTICULARLY DISAGREEABLE EXTENSION
OF THEIR DILEMMA INTO SOUTHERN PART OF RED SEA.

8. SAUDIS WERE PUSHING THEIR LUCK WITH SOMALIA, AND
SOUTH YEMEN. SOVIETS RESPONDED WITH OFFER -- BROUGHT TO
AREA BY CASTRO -- OF SOME KIND OF ALLIANCE OR ENTENTE.
SOVIETS WERE BACKING IT UP WITH PROMISES OF ARMS AND VERY
LARGE ECONOMIC AID FUND.

9. SAUDIS STOPPED THIS EFFORT DEAD IN ITS TRACKS. AS
WE REPORTED IN SANA 1222 OF MARCH 77, SAUDIS GOT SOMALIS
AND SOUTH YEMENIS TO JOIN NORTH YEMEN AND SUDAN IN QUADRI-
PARTITE CONFERENCE IN TAIZ. SAUDIS LOOKED FOR CEMENT IN
THIS RELATIONSHIP TO COME FROM SAUDI MONEY PLUS, FOR
SOMALIA, ANNEXATION OF OGADEN AND PERHAPS DJIBOUTI. FOR
SALEM IT WOULD COME IN FORM OF STRENGTH AGAINST HIS RIVAL
ABD AL-FATTAH ISMAIL AND, INEVITABLY, HEAVY SAUDI DOSES
OF CASH. FOR YEMEN, IT WAS MORE CASH, AND A LEADER-
SHIP ROLE WHICH ENHANCED HAMDI'S CENTRAL GOVERNMENT OVER
THE TRIBES. SAUDI PROGRAM HAD MILITARY AID COMPONENT EVEN
THOUGH SAUDIS HAD TO HOPE TO TURN TO US OR FRENCH FOR
EQUIPMENT.

10. WE SPECULATED IN SANA 1222 THAT "FAILURE TO CONSOLIDATE
POSITION IN HORN WHICH COMPARABLE TO THEIR POSITION IN
ANGOLA AND MOZAMBIQUE WOULD BE SERIOUS STRATEGIC SETBACK
FOR SOVIETS IN AFRICA." IT ALSO HAD POTENTIAL TO ELIMINATE
SOVIET INFLUENCE ALONG NORTHERN INDIAN OCEAN -- RED SEA OIL
ROUTES, LEAVING SOVIETS IN TRUNCATED ETHIOPIA WITH UN-
POPULAR, UNSTABLE RADICAL GOVERNMENT WHICH WOULD BE PREY

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TO SAME SAUDI TACTICS IN FUTURE.

11. IF ALL THIS IS TRUE, THEN SOVIETS MAY HAVE DECIDED GALVANIC EFFORT WAS NEEDED TO BREAK PINCERS WHICH THREATENED PLUCK THEM OUT OF LOWER END OF RED SEA JUST AS THEY HAD EARLIER BEEN PLUCKED FROM NORTHERN END. THAT EFFORT STARTED WITH MASSIVE MILITARY DELIVERIES TO ETHIOPIA AND HARSH PROSECUTION OF WAR THERE AGAINST SOMALIA WITH CUBAN LEVEES. IT CONTINUED IN SOUTH YEMEN WITH SUPPORT FOR COUP WHICH KILLED PRESIDENT AL-GHASHMI IN NORTH AS WELL AS PRESIDENT ALI IN SOUTH. SOVIETS HAVE DECISIVELY DEFEATED SAUDIS AND OTHER LOCAL FOES. THEIR POSITION OF STRENGTH IN THIS CORNER OF WORLD IS FORMIDABLE AND THEY HAVE ADOPTED NEW TACTIC OF ALLIANCE WITH MOST RADICAL LOCAL GROUP PLUS DIRECT INTERVENTION.

12. USG, FOR VARIETY OF REASONS, DID NOTHING THROUGHOUT THIS PERIOD OF SAUDI REVERSAL. OF COURSE, SO FAR AS WE IN SANA KNOW, USG HAD NOT BEEN CONSULTED ABOUT SAUDI PLANS IN ADVANCE AND HAD NO GOOD REASON TO BAIL OUT THE SOMALIS WHEN THEY GOT IN OVER THEIR HEADS. HOWEVER, WE SEEMED TO HAVE LOOKED AT THE PROBLEM IN TERMS OF ITS PIECES, THE SOMALIS ON ONE HAND, THE SOUTH YEMENIS ON ANOTHER HAND, AND THEN THERE WAS DJIBOUTI -- WHAT TO DO ABOUT THAT? -- AND THOSE ERITREANS WHOM THE ISRAELIS WANTED US TO HELP CRUSH. WE HAD TWO BUREAUS INVOLVED IN STATE DEPARTMENT AND NO RPT NO REGIONAL OR GLOBAL VIEW AIMED AT USSR. WE WOULD OFFER THEM REASONABLE INDUCEMENTS ON SALT AND TRADE AND THEY WOULD, WITHOUT OUR SENDING ARMS, LIMIT THEIR BEHAVIOR AND GOALS IN THIRD WORLD CONFLICTS.

13. AS WE SEE MATTER NOW, SOVIETS HAVE FOUND TOOL TO BEGIN TO UNDO TROUBLES WHICH THEY SUFFERED IN LAST FIVE YEARS IN MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA. TOOL IS GIVING (LOTS OF) ARMS TO RADICALS, SUPPORTING THEM DIRECTLY WHEN CHIPS ARE DOWN. RADICALS WILL DO FOR SOVIETS WHAT ISRAELIS DID FOR US.

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TOOL WORKS, AND WELL. WHY SHOULD THEY GIVE IT UP.
SO: YAR AND OMAN ARE NEXT.

14. SOVIET PRESSURE COULD BUT NEED NOT TAKE FORM OF DIRECT ATTACK EARLY IN GAME. SOVIETS DON'T NECESSARILY WANT WAR AND, ANYWAY, REAL GOALS ARE SAUDI ARABIA AND GULF OIL PRODUCERS. SOVIET TACTIC IS TO DO ALL IT CAN TO

DISCREDIT US AS DEPENDABLE FRIEND OF PENINSULAR STATES AND
CREATE SECURE POSITION (AND BASES) ON RIM OF PENINSULA
FROM WHICH TO MOVE INTO REST OF AREA WHEN TIME IS RIGHT.

15. THAT'S WHAT MAKES OUR RESPONSE TO ANTICIPATED KHALID
LETTER SO IMPORTANT. THAT'S WHY SAUD SAYS HIS GOVERNMENT
REGARDS THAT RESPONSE AS MORE IMPORTANT THAN CAMP DAVID
TALKS. SAUDIS KNOW DANGERS OF ISOLATION. THEY KNOW THEIR
OWN MILITARY WEAKNESS. THEY WANT TO CONTAIN SOVIETS IN
SOUTH YEMEN WITH STRONG YAR DEFENSE. THIS IS FIRST BUT
ESSENTIAL STEP TO MAKING ECONOMIC BOYCOTT, PROPAGANDA
EFFORT, YAR CONDEMNATION OF SOUTH, WORK TO DETRIMENT OF
RADICAL HEGEMONY IN PDRY, WORK TO BRING FORTH NEW SALEM
RUBBAYYA ALI. IT IS ONLY AND GOOD ALTERNATIVE TO WAR.

16. WE SHOULD COOPERATE WITH SAUDIS FOR OUR OWN GOOD
AS WELL AS THEIRS.
RANSOM
UNQTE CHRISTOPHER

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